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A TOWN ALONG THE WAY

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september 19

Volume LVI, number 24, 1952

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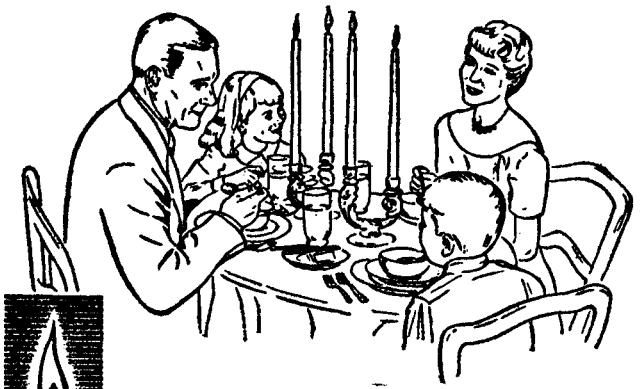

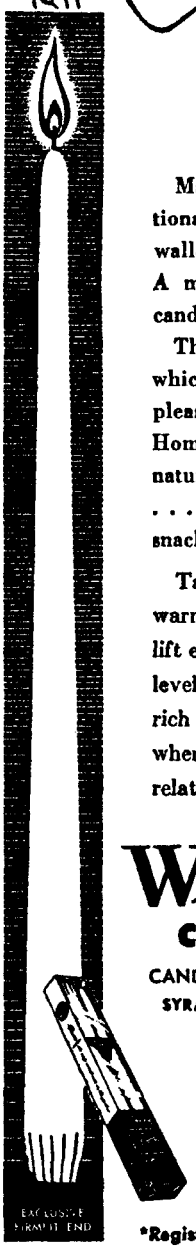

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386 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 16

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Published weekly, printed and copyrighted 1952, in the U. S. A., by The Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y. MUrray Hill 3-9685. Entered as second-class matter, February 9, 1934, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. U. S. and Canada, $7 a year. Foreign $8. Single copies, 15c.

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THE Commonweal

week by week

FREEDOM FOR EASTERN EUROPE

THE controversy touched off by General Eisenhower on the subject of the U.S.S.R.'s European satellites has raised many hopes and fears. It has brought to the minds of many Americans the fate of peoples whom they have too long ignored or forgotten. It has also aroused new fears of war in Western Europe. But, as the controversy lengthens, with political figures in both parties joining in, the prospect has grown somewhat clearer.

All hands are agreed that the United States must continually remind the peoples of the world that we are opposed to the inclusion of Poland, the Baltic States, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the rest in the Russian empire. At the same time it is painfully obvious that there is no possibility of successful national uprisings at this time. It is worse than foolhardy to talk as if there were, needlessly endangering lives.

The peoples in each of these countries are powerless. Communist dictatorships directed from Moscow hold them in thrall. Army, industry, communications, local government—all such things—are within the Soviet's iron grasp. Liberation could come only from without, at the cost of a new world war.

The U.S.S.R. can be counted on to hold onto its new possessions with tenacity. Satellite industry plays a leading part in the building up of the Russian war machine. In regions like Slovakia a whole series of new centers for arms-making has been established. Polish coal and Rumanian oil now go into the hopper in sizable amounts.

Moreover, with their skill and experience in exploiting and taking over patriotic sentiments, the Russians have done a highly effective job of indoctrination in Eastern Europe. They have succeeded in making their own objectives in each satellite nation palatable, and even desirable, for many of their new subjects. It is even questionable how widespread aspirations for revolt are today among these subject nations.

In view of the U.S.S.R.'s presence and armed strength, it is putting things mildly to state that incitement to immediate rebellion would be premature. But does that mean that here in America we can shrug our shoulders and write off the subject East European peoples until a distant and indefinite future? Not at all.

TOO many of the Poles, the Czechs and the rest have experienced national suppression before not to recognize it in their present set-up. Exiles abroad and brave men in the various undergrounds at home, who are holding their fire, can be counted on to keep the flame of patriotism alive, given sufficient aid and encouragement. The steady building up of the defenses and living conditions in Western Europe will help sustain morale nearby.

Channels of communication with the satellites must be kept as open as possible. One of these is East-West trade—an operation circumscribed from the West's point of view by determination not to contribute much in the way of strategic elements to Soviet armament. But this does not preclude exchanges of goods and services altogether. The current *Economist*, for instance, advocates as a policy: "In the short run, . . . a moderate and flexible attitude towards East-West trade, the West importing as much as is economically and strategically important to itself and giving away as little as possible of economically vital supplies in return."

There remains the Voice of America, which for so much of its brief existence has been hamstrung by inadequate funds and the difficulty of planning programs which present this country to Europeans in an appealing light. The fact that the date of liberation is at present hard to foresee means that this is a period of laying foundations in Eastern Europe. It is a period for letting the Poles, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Czechs and others know that we suffer with them in their subjection, that we are eager to see their countries free and in a position to develop along the lines of their own particular national genius.

This is likewise a period for beaming to the satellite peoples the message that America is the apostle of freedom, of the Four Freedoms. That we seek

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peace and prosperity for their nations as well as our own. That when the hour strikes in which it is feasible for them to throw off their present chains, they will find us at their side. In the presumably long interval that stretches ahead for the satellite countries, Americans, and the Voice of America, have a job to do.

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

DURING recent months the Passport Division of the State Department has come in for increasingly critical attention. The Internal Security Act of 1950 specified that "subversives" should be denied passports, primarily to keep them from possible service in a Kremlin courier system. Few people would quarrel with this as a goal, but the manner in which the Passport Division has administered this provision of the law is open to serious question.

Although comparatively few applications have been turned down, applicants have, on occasion, been denied passports without ever receiving any formal hearing. Some of those whose requests for passports were rejected received only the vaguest and most generalized sort of explanation of the decision. As a result of these and similar procedures, many who by and large supported the general purpose of the Internal Security Act nevertheless came to feel that the Passport Division was sometimes guilty of highly arbitrary behavior.

In the face of mounting criticism of its methods, the State Department has now revised its procedure for handling passport problems. In the future a person whose passport application is in doubt will be notified of that fact. The specific reasons for which his application is being questioned will be explained, and he will be granted a hearing by the Passport Division itself. Then, if his application is rejected, he will be able to take his case to a newly created Board of Passport Appeals. To insure an objective review of the evidence, members of this body will be officials not connected with the Passport Division, and the decision of this Board will be final.

Even though the number of people directly affected is small, these are still welcome reforms. The changes that have been made in no way lessen national security, and the Passport Division should now be free of that note of arbitrary decision, unchecked by appeal or review, which is repugnant to our best national traditions.

NEXT WEEK

GEOFFREY ASHE writes about Koestler and his search for the infinite.

"Beside Arthur Koestler, nearly all the other ex-Communist intellectuals are as children. The first part of his autobiography tells something of the process which drew him into the Party long before the Popular Front. He is marked off from the others by a difference even more noticeable than that of timing. He was once, in the common capitalistic sense, a success. The German Communists' prize catch held a lucrative post in a famous company. Clearly he is a man worth studying."

BISHOP FORD'S DEATH

THE news and manner of the death of Bishop Francis X. Ford of Maryknoll at the hands of the Chinese Communists comes as a shock to Americans of various beliefs. Consciousness that it was martyrdom he was undergoing must have served to sustain him in the indignities he suffered.

Here was a man who had joyfully devoted half a lifetime to the well-being of the people of China. He was one of the very earliest students for the missions at Maryknoll forty years ago. He was one of the first four missioners of that new American order to go out to the Far East, where he remained, except for brief intervals, with his adopted people until his imprisonment and death.

In his devotion to his charges and delight in his labor among them, Bishop Ford exemplified the best in the modern Christian missionary spirit. The cruel death of so gentle and selfless a man, in the midst of his labors to bring the Good Tidings to his beloved flock, itself constitutes a message to this country and to the world. His martyrdom provides a fitting climax to a life lived for others for the love of God.

EISENHOWER AS TAFT

TWO weeks ago, The Commonweal carried an editorial entitled "Eisenhower As Eisenhower." Although not endorsing him, this editorial expressed satisfaction with the responsible level at which the General was maintaining his campaign, and congratulated him on his refusal to make political capital out of the emotionally effective but intellectually disreputable slogans of partisan politics.

Since these happy words were written, the General has opened his campaign "in earnest," and its new tone has delighted the hearts of those Republican journals which had begun to complain, in public, that Eisenhower lacked fight. The General's speeches

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on the "mess in Washington" and his pronouncements on foreign policy suggest that during the past few weeks he has learned a lot, most of it from the Scripps-Howard, Hearst, and McCormick press.

Several months ago, for example, Eisenhower confessed that he did not know who was responsible for "the loss of China." This admission of honest ignorance was welcomed by many independents as a refreshing confession of humility in the face of complexity, but it horrified the Taft-MacArthurites who will admit no possibility of ignorance on this score. They hastened to set him right.

The GOP's Orthodox apparently told the General a lot of other things too, because he now seems sure that the Administration has "bungled us perilously close to World War III"; that the foreign policy he served so brilliantly in Europe is a policy based on "fear", and that it is the work of diplomatic incompetents, knaves, or worse, who, because of their incompetence, knavery, or worse, are responsible for most of the threats facing the free world today.

All this the General attempted to prove through the remarkable variations on an ancient *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy which he played before his delighted audience in Philadelphia. Indeed, judging from the "new" Eisenhower's conviction of Democratic total-depravity, one guesses that he must wonder how he could ever have served an Administration which has, in his current opinion, "besmirched our name before the world."

It was impossible from the start, of course, for Eisenhower to please all his well-wishers, because there always existed among them two sharply defined and mutually exclusive concepts of his candidacy.

There was the concept, held by such men as Walter Lippmann and such journals as the New York *Times*, which viewed an Eisenhower candidacy as one above factionalism and partisanship, and the candidate as a man of such vision, integrity and courage that behind him all men of good-will could unite. And then there was another concept which saw Eisenhower as an answer to the Republican party's prayers because he, with his tremendous popular prestige, could assure a GOP victory. The believers in the first concept brought the General to Chicago; the pragmatic proponents of the second made his nomination possible once he got there.

The first group hoped that Eisenhower would make the Republican party, and perhaps the whole of American politics, over in his own shining image; the second faction, having nominated the General, insisted that *he* be made over to fit its own idea of what a "fighting" Republican candidate should be.

The last two weeks have shown which concept is likely to triumph. And as Eisenhower now adopts the partisan denunciations and bitterness of the one group, it is inevitable that a large wing of his party, and its spokesmen, the Republican press, will rejoice, but it is also inevitable that proponents of the other, earlier, concept will think sadly of the end of a myth, the death of a hero.

What is left for the defenders of the original Eisenhower legend is now almost daily demonstrated in the editorial pages of the New York *Times*. This independent journal, having made a seemingly irrevocable commitment to the Eisenhower candidacy back in the fine days of the General's European crusade, is now driven to the making of touching, but remarkably unconvincing, acts of faith in its hero. They are almost religious in their fervor. But there is one great difference. The religious Act of Faith, although *super*-rational, can never be *anti*-rational, and its preamble is the concrete evidence for truth which the senses present to the intellect. As Dwight D. Eisenhower expands in his new role of a personable Robert A. Taft, such a preamble in this case becomes increasingly unlikely.

IMMIGRATION COMMISSION

FEW pieces of legislation in recent years have aroused as many protests from responsible civic and religious groups as the McCarran-Walter immigration bill. Passed by Congress, vetoed by President Truman and then passed again, the law is narrowly restrictive as to the number of immigrants who may enter the U.S. and blatantly discriminatory in regard to the proportion of entrants allowed from various races and nationalities.

Under the guise of bringing order to our confused immigration regulations, as it stands the McCarran-Walter measure simply reinforces and gives new authority to racist notions that have long been discredited and should have long since been abandoned. It compromises our national honor, and its repeal or drastic amendment is a matter of urgent necessity.

Now, only a few months after the bill's final passage, President Truman has established a special commission to study its effects in actual operation and to recommend corrective measures to the next Congress. Among those appointed by the President was Monsignor John O'Grady of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, who fought a gallant, if losing, battle against the bill's passage.

The McCarran-Walter measure is already three months older than it ought to be. It is to be hoped that the work of the special commission will mark the first step towards the law's early demise.

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A MATTER OF ESCAPE

THE Presidential campaign is remarkable in many ways, but in no way more striking than in the brash inconsistency of certain Republican orators and editorialists.

The party with the isolationist following (and voting record) is leading a crusade against "mere containment," and the more isolationist the record of the orator, the louder his charges against the Democrats' "long record of appeasement."

Who are the "appeasers"? The men who were yesterday called "warmongers." It is almost enough to learn that a man was an isolationist in 1940 to know that he finds "mere containment" wholly reprehensible in 1952. If he cried long and loud about bringing the boys home in 1945, you can feel fairly certain that he can get very worked up today about how the Administration allowed our military power to dwindle after VJ day.

If he carried on a sniping campaign against the war throughout 1941-1945, you can expect him to talk at length today about his great "disillusionment" after the war was won. If he is opposed to sending aid to India, don't be surprised when he goes on about the loss of China.

Find a man who applauded Truman's decision to go into Korea in 1950, later condemned it as "Truman's war" and wanted to pull out completely when the Chinese came in, then still later wanted to enlarge it when MacArthur was dismissed, sneering at "police action" and saying that the only consideration in war is "victory"—find such a one during this campaign and he will give you a lecture on the dangers of not being "consistent" and decisive in foreign policy.

I am thinking now of a column I just finished reading. The columnist says he is nauseated by the low blows struck in *Time* magazine's attack on Senator McCarthy. Quite properly, this writer, a professional moralist, takes *Time* to task for the innuendo-laden vocabulary used when that magazine "goes after" someone. In this case Senator McCarthy was the victim. But the columnist, so sensitive to the low blow where *Time* is concerned, says he finds nothing reprehensible in the Senator's own tactics. Why this double standard?

I agree with the columnist that it was, for instance, a low blow on *Time's* part to say that Joe McCarthy sometimes cannot pass up a steak on Friday. But why is it that when McCarthy says ominously, to take a more serious instance of the same offense, that Governor Stevenson "could be disturbed because I am checking your record since the day you entered Government service at about the same time and in the same department as the Hiss, Abt, Witt and Pressman group," unfair innuendo ceases to be nauseating?

Anyone who has given much thought to this question of political inconsistency must wonder occasionally whether partisanship alone lies at the bottom of it. Is there something about a Republican, as such, which explains it? I don't think so.

I think that a large group of people in this country is either not ready, or not willing, to deal with the realities of the times. By whatever means possible, they withdraw—not into a cloistered indifference but into the surer safety of criticism and negation. They are forever living in one dream world or another and try valiantly to project their dream into reality.

Sometimes it is the past they hide in, the dream of the isolated America that ceased to exist sometime ago. At other times, it is some future utopia where the past has been undone and the present—which obviously is leading not to utopia but to a world just as complex as the present—is repudiated. Whatever refuge is taken, there is no coming to grips with real problems. Advice is given freely, of course, but one knows that if the advice were taken, a contradictory course of action would be immediately suggested. There must be no identification with concrete efforts to deal with problems because then one would have to associate himself with political reality and with all the ambiguity, the mixture of true and false, good and bad, success and failure involved in every human undertaking.

The eternal critic can never be wrong. Every mistake an actual undertaking incurs (and mistakes are inevitable) means, in his mind, a stunning personal victory. Every success pales in splendor beside the success that his policy (never defined) *might* have had.

The isolationist of the 1940's regards the troubled world situation today as a glowing tribute to his own wisdom. He has no responsibility for a Hitler-ridden world, because it no longer exists, and he has escaped responsibility for the Russian conquests because no matter what was done he was against it. He has no responsibility, it becomes increasingly clear, for anything—and he wants to keep it that way. That is why he takes so easily to the role of constant—however inconsistent—critic. It is his own private little bomb shelter from the explosions of the twentieth century.

I said I don't think that there is anything in the Republican party as such to explain all this. It happens that the Republicans have been the "out" party for a long time. It would not do for the refugees-from-the-present to associate themselves with any Administration actually wrestling with the problems of the day. They are by profession the Opposition. If General Eisenhower is elected, I suspect they will be quick to leave the Republican banner. It wouldn't do to have to bear any of the burden for the General's possible (and probable) mistakes. Colonel McCormick has already led the way.

JOHN COGLEY.

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The Sanity of St. Benedict

"AT THE TOUCH OF HIS MILD INSPIRATION, THE BONES OF A NEW ORDER STIRRED AND CLOTHED THEMSELVES WITH LIFE."

WHITTAKER CHAMBERS

QUEEN Victoria left this world almost at the moment that I chanced to enter it. Her memory, when I was old enough to identify it, fell thinly across my earliest childhood. People still spoke of "the Queen," as if in all history there had been only one and everybody must know at once that Queen Victoria was meant. Somewhat later, I sensed that her going had stirred a deep-set uneasiness, as if with her a part of the mainland of human experience had sunk into the sea and no one quite knew what further subsidences and commotions to expect. Yet, in those far-off days, no one ever chanted to me that grim line of the Queen's favorite poet:

And the great aeon sings in blood:

though I was not very old when I had the "Death of Arthur" read to me in full, and, after the depressingly long glories of the winter moon, I noted with relief that

The new sun rose, bringing the new year.

With the rest of my generation, I grew in that sun's illusory light. For the historical skies of my boyhood were only infrequently troubled, chiefly by a triad of figures powerful and unpredictable enough to thrill from time to time the nerve of reality. They were, of course, in America, Theodore Roosevelt: in England, King Edward VII: and, on the continent of Europe, bestriding it like a self-inflated colossus, the German Kaiser. Each had a characteristic motif, too, like a Wagnerian hero: a little repetitive phrase that set the historic mood or forecast that each, for good or ill, was about to vault again upon the world stage, to give some new tingling turn to the plot. Thus, from the heart of Europe, would come characteristic variations on the Bismarckian theme of *Blut und Eisen*. In America, rose blithe shouts of "Bully! It's bully!" While Edwardian England had reversed the plea in which Swinburne exhorted Walt Whitman to "send but a song oversea to us," and both shores of the Atlantic rocked to the surge and thunder of Tarara-boom-de-ay.

Long before I had the slightest notion what the barbaric sounds might mean, as language or destiny, I listened fascinated to people chanting:

A Brussels carpet on the floor:
An elevator at the door:
Tarara-boom-de-ay; Tarara-boom-de-ay!

It was not only because of its gayness that it embedded itself in my memory. For what others found gay, I found indefinably ominous, as fixing a tone, a touch of dissolution that, even as a sensitive child, I could not possibly have explained to myself or anybody else. But one day, much later, the echo of Tarara-boom-de-ay fused itself unexpectedly with something that would seem to have nothing to do with it— a more or less random remark by one of my college instructors in Contemporary Civilization.

CONTEMPORARY Civilization, a course required for all freshmen at Columbia College, was taught by several young men whom I remember chiefly as rather lugubrious—disillusioned veterans of the First World War, and a conscientious objector who had refused to take part in it. One day, the objector, staring at some point far beyond the backs of our heads, observed that "the world is entering upon a new Dark Age."

It was one of the few things that I carried away from Contemporary Civilization, required for all freshmen. And it was not so much the meaning of the words, which I was far too unfledged to understand, as the toneless despondency with which they were uttered that struck me. That, and their acceptance of the Dark Ages as something relevant, and possibly recurrent in history.

For under the sunlit skies of my boyhood, the Dark Ages were seldom mentioned: if at all, chiefly by way of contrast to the light of our progress. For the voice of that time was, at least as it reached me, wholly incapable of the irony with which, little more than a decade later, Jean de Bosschere would ask: *"Qui se leva pour dire que nous ne sommes pas en plein jour?"*

The Dark Ages were inexcusable and rather disreputable—a bad time when the machine of civilization in its matchless climb to the twentieth century had sheared a whole rank of king-pins and landed mankind in a centuries-long ditch. At best, it was a time when monks

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Mr. Chambers' essay forms a part of "Saints For Now," edited by Clare Boothe Luce, to be published later this month by Sheed & Ward. (Copyright 1952 Sheed & Ward, Inc., New York.)

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sat in unsanitary cells with a human skull before them, and copied and re-copied, for lack of more fruitful employment, the tattered records of a dead antiquity. That was the Dark Ages at best, which, as anybody could see, was not far from the worst.

If a bright boy, leafing through history, asked: "How did the Dark Ages come about?" he might be told that "Rome fell!"—as if a curtain simply dropped. Boys of ten or twelve, even if bright, are seldom bright enough to say to themselves: "Surely, Rome did not fall in a day." If a boy had asked: "But were there no great figures in the Dark Ages, like Teddy Roosevelt, King Edward and the Kaiser?", he might well have been suspected of something like an unhealthy interest in the habits and habitats of spiders. If he had persisted and asked: "But isn't it clear that the Dark Ages are of a piece with our age of light, that our civilization is by origin Catholic, that, in fact, we cannot understand what we have become without understanding what we came from?", he would have been suspected of something much worse than priggery—a distressing turn to Popery.

I was no such bright boy (or youth). I reached young manhood serene in the knowledge that, between the failed light of antiquity and the buzzing incandescence of our own time, there had intervened a thousand years of darkness from which the spirit of man had begun to liberate itself (intellectually) first in the riotous luminosity of the Renaissance, in Humanism, in the eighteenth century, and at last (politically) in the French Revolution. For the dividing line between the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages is not fast, and they were easily lumped together.

To be sure, even before Queen Victoria died, the pre-Raphaelites had popularized certain stage properties of the Middle Ages. And on the Continent there had been Novalis, to mention only one name (but no one in my boyhood mentioned Novalis). There had been Huysmans (we knew Huysmans, but his name was touched with decadence). There was a fad of the Gothic and figures like Viollet-le-Duc: while an obscure American, Henry Adams, was even then composing *Mont St. Michel* and *Chartres,* and indicting certain thoughts on the Virgin and the Dynamo that would echo briefly above the clink of their swizzle sticks in the patter of my generation.

I WAS in my twenties, a young intellectual savage in college with thousands of others, before the fact slowly dawned upon me that, for a youth always under the spell of history, the history I knew was practically no history at all. It consisted of two disjointed parts—the history of Greece and Rome, with side-trips to Egypt and the Fertile Crescent: and a history of the last four hundred years of Europe and America. Of what lay in between, what joined the parts and gave them continuity, and the pulse of life and breath of spirit, my ignorance was darker than any Dark Age. Less by intelligence than by the kind of sixth sense which makes us aware of objects ahead in the dark, I divined that a main land-mass of the history of Western civilization loomed hidden beyond my sight.

I turned briefly to medieval history. But the distinguished teachers who first guided me into the Dark Ages seemed, even to my blindness, not too sure of their own way. They knew facts, more facts than I would ever know. Yet in their understanding of the facts something was missing, something that would enable them to feel that the life of the times they were exploring was of one tissue with the life of ours, that neither could be divided from the other, without an arterial tearing, that neither could be understood without the other. Their exposition, even of so obvious a problem as the causes for the fall of the Roman West left me with a sense of climbing railless stairs above a chasm at night.

Rome fell, I learned, because of the barbarian hordes and a series of great barbarian leaders. H. G. Wells would presently startle me with the information that the hordes had been comparative handfuls among the populations they conquered, while, somewhat later, I would come to believe that the barbarian leaders were scarcely more barbarian than the Romans, that many of them were disaffected officials of the Roman state and their conduct was not so much that of invaders as what we should now call Fifth Columnists.

Or I was taught that Rome's collapse was due in part to the disrepair of the Roman roads and the breakdown of communication. Or the resurgence of the Pontine marshes and the high incidence of malaria at Rome. Or that the conquest of the East had introduced alien and indigestible masses into the Empire, and corrupted Rome, and so it fell. But even a collegiate savage could scarcely fail to note that it was precisely the corrupt Eastern half of the Empire that survived as a political unit, and, for another eight hundred years, stood against the vigorous East, and was the bulwark of the fallen West.

There were other facts and factors. My ignorance could question them only so far, and then not their reality for the most part, but their power to explain by themselves an event so complex and so thunderous as the crash of a civilization. Some more subtle dissolvent, I sensed, must also have been, undivined, at work. I thought I had caught a hint of it in Salvianus' *moritur et ridet*: "The Roman Empire is luxurious, but it is filled with misery. It is dying but it laughs—*moritur et ridet.*" But Salvian, we learned with a deflecting smile, was an extremist, though, in the hindsight of disaster, his foresight would scarcely seem overstated. What interested me was that men had smiled complacently at Salvian's words when he spoke them, and men still

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smiled at them complacently a thousand years later—the same kind of men, I was beginning to suspect, who smiled upon a similar turning point of history.

IN any case, for me it was too late. What the missing something was in the crisis of Rome I was not to learn in classrooms. The crisis of civilization in my own time had caught me in its undertow and soon swept me far beyond that earlier Dark Ages. Not until it had cast me back upon its rocks, by grace a defeated fugitive from its forces, would I again find peace or pause to seek to determine what, if anything, that mortal experience had taught me about the history of our time, or any other.

This century was half gone, and with it more than half my life, that at that moment seemed all but to have ended in an ordeal with which my name is linked, when someone, seeking only to comfort me, once more directed my eyes to that particular point in the past from which, some thirty years before, I had abruptly taken them.

Anne Ford, my friend of many years standing, sent me from the Monastery of Gethsemani a little silver medal, blessed in my family's name and mine, by Father Louis—Thomas Merton of *The Seven-Storey Mountain,* who, as a later student, had sat in the same college classrooms, listening to some of the same instructors I had known. On the medal was an image of St. Benedict.

I found myself asking who St. Benedict had been. I knew that he had founded a monastic order, which bore his name, and that for it he had written a famous Rule.

I had once written a little news story about plans for the restoration of his monastery of Monte Cassino after its destruction in the World War of 1939. What I had written had presumably been read at least by one hundred thousand people (so much for journalism in our time). But a seeker after knowledge at any age, certainly one fifty years old, must begin by confessing that he probably knew less about St. Benedict than many a pupil in parochial school. Nor, had I asked a dozen friends, regarded as highly intelligent by themselves and the world, could one of them have told me much more about St. Benedict than I knew myself. The fact that such ignorance could exist, could be taken as a matter of course, was more stunning than the abyss of ignorance itself.

For the briefest prying must reveal that, simply in terms of history, leaving aside for a moment his sanctity, St. Benedict was a colossal figure on a scale of importance in shaping the civilization of the West against which few subsequent figures could measure. And of those who might measure in terms of historic force, almost none could measure in terms of good achieved.

Nor was St. Benedict an isolated peak. He was only one among ranges of human height that reached away from him in time in both directions, past and future, but of which, with one or two obvious exceptions, one was as ignorant as of Benedict: St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Pope St. Leo the Great, Pope St. Gregory the Great, St. Francis of Assisi, Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII).

Clearly, a cleft cut across the body of Christendom itself, and raised an overwhelming question: What, in fact, was the civilization of the West? If it was Christendom, why had it turned its back on half its roots and meanings and become cheerfully ignorant of those who had embodied them? If it was not Christendom, what was it? And what were those values that it claimed to assert against the forces of active evil that beset it in the greatest crisis of history since the fall of Rome? Did the failure of the Western World to know what it was lie at the root of its spiritual despondency, its intellectual confusion, its moral chaos, the dissolving bonds of faith and loyalty within itself, its swift political decline in barely four decades from hegemony of the world to a demoralized rump of Europe little larger that it had been in the crash of the Roman West, and an America still disputing the nature of the crisis, its gravity, whether it existed at all, or what to do about it?

Answers to such questions could not be extemporized. At the moment, a baffled seeker could do little more than grope for St. Benedict's hand and pray in all humbleness to be led over the traces of the saint's progress to the end that he might be, if not more knowledgeable, at least less nakedly ignorant. The biographical facts were synoptic enough and chiefly to be found in the *Dialogues* of Pope St. Gregory the Great or inferred between the lines of St. Benedict's Rule.

BENEDICT had been born, toward the end of the fifth century, of good family in the sturdy countryside of Nursia, which lay close enough to Rome to catch the tremors of its sack, in 410, by Alaric's West Goths (the first time in eight hundred years that the City had fallen), and the shock of its sack by the Vandals, who, in 455 completed the material and human havoc that the West Goths had begun.

To a Rome darkened by such disasters, Benedict had been sent to school as a boy of fourteen or fifteen. There he was shaken by the corrupt customs of his schoolmates, it is said. But we may surely conjecture that he was touched, too, like sensitive minds in our own day, by a sense of brooding, indefinable disaster, of doom still incomplete, for the Dark Ages were scarcely more than begun.

The boy fled from Rome, or, as we might say, ran away from school, and settled with a loose-knit congregation about thirty miles from the City. There he performed his first miracle. When, as a result, men called

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him good, he fled again. For, though he was a boy, he was clearly old enough to fear the world, especially when it praises. This time he fled into the desert wilderness near Subiaco, where for three years he lived alone in a cave. To those who presently found him, he seemed more like a wild creature than a man. Those were the years of the saint's conquest of his flesh, his purgation, illumination and perhaps his prayerful union with God. They must also have been the years he plumbed all the perils of solitary austerities and the hermit life, by suffering them.

At any rate, the saint left Subiaco to enter on his first experience in governing a community of monks. He returned to Subiaco, and , in twelve years, organized twelve Benedictine communities. His days were filled with devotion and with labor and touched with miracles. But again human factors threatened failure. St. Benedict with a few companions withdrew to Monte Cassino, some eighty miles southeast of Rome. There he overthrew an ancient altar of Apollo (for paganism was still rooted in the countryside), and there he raised his own altar.

On those heights, he organized his community, ruled his monks, performed new miracles, distilled his holy experience in his Holy Rule. There he died at a date which is in dispute, but was probably about 547, when the campaigns of the Eastern Roman Empire to recover Italy from the East Goths had so permanently devastated the Peninsula that the irruption of the Lombards into the ruins brought a new horror rather than any novelty in havoc.

Against that night and that ruin, like a man patiently lighting a wick in a tempest, St. Benedict set his Rule. There had been other monastic Rules before—St. Pachomius' and St. Basil's, for example. St. Benedict called his the *Holy Rule,* setting it down and setting it apart from all others, with a consciousness of its singular authority that has led some biographers to speculate whether he had not been prompted by the Holy See to write it. Perhaps it is permissible to hazard that his authority need have proceeded from nothing more than that unwavering confidence which commonly sustains genius.

What was there in this little book that changed the world? To us, at first glance, it seems prosaic enough, even fairly obvious. That, indeed, is the heart of its inspiration. In an age of pillar saints and furiously competing athletes of the spirit, when men plunged by thousands into the desert, in a lunge towards God, and in revulsion from man, St. Benedict's Rule brought a saving and creative sanity. Its temper was that of moderation as against excesses of zeal, of fruitful labor as against austerities pushed to the point of fruitlessness, of discipline as against enthusiasm, of continence of spirit and conduct as against incontinence.

IT has been said (by T. F. Lindsay in his sensitive and searching *St. Benedict*) that, in a shattered society, the Holy Rule, to those who submitted to its mild but strict sway, restored the discipline and power of Roman family life.

I venture that it did something else as well. For those who obeyed it, it ended three great alienations of the spirit whose action, I suspect, touched on that missing something which my instructors failed to find among the causes of the fall of Rome. The same alienations, I further suspect, can be seen at their work of dissolution among ourselves, and are perhaps among the little-noticed reasons why men turn to Communism. They are: the alienation of the spirit of man from traditional authority; his alienation from the idea of traditional order; and a crippling alienation that he feels at the point where civilization has deprived him of the joy of simple productive labor.

These alienations St. Benedict fused into a new surge of the human spirit by directing the frustrations that informed them into the disciplined service of God. At the touch of his mild inspiration, the bones of a new order stirred and clothed themselves with life, drawing to itself much of what was best and most vigorous among the ruins of man and his work in the Dark Ages, and conserving and shaping its energy for that unparalleled outburst of mind and spirit in the Middle Ages. For about the Benedictine monasteries what we, having casually lost the Christian East, now casually call the West, once before regrouped and saved itself.

So bald a summary can do little more than indicate the dimensions of the Benedictine achievement and plead for its constant re-examination. Seldom has the need been greater. For we sense, in the year 1952, that we may stand closer to the year 410 than at any other time in the centuries since. If that statement seems as extreme as any of Salvian's, three hundred million Russians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, East Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, and all the Christian Balkans, would tell you that it is not—would tell you if they could lift their voices through the night of the new Dark Ages that have fallen on them. For them the year 410 has already come.

Coming Book Numbers of The Commonweal

October 24 ..... Fall Books
November 16 ..... Children's
December 5 ..... Christmas

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A Town Along the Way

JOHN A. LYNCH

FONDI lies slightly inland some sixty miles southeast of Rome, northwest of Itri and Minturno and in a triangle with Gaeta and Terracina on the sea. Thomas Aquinas once taught there, the route of the ancient Via Appia lies through the center of the town, and there is a castle, or the remains of one, and ancient walls, so that a certain romance clings to the place. But Fondi is not a tourist town. It lies at the uppermost end of a plain, pocketed as it were, rimmed in by mountains on three sides, and it is by nature not made for vacationing, nor even for leisure.

I was at Fondi eight years ago, in the spring, and although at the time it was just another town that lay in the way, just a place on the map, a name, neither romantic nor unromantic, like any of a dozen other towns one might come across, fight for, by-pass or die in, I thought later on that I would like to go back there. But at the time it was just a name like many others, like Itri or Minturno, and later, Palaia, Villamagna, Belvedere or San Clemente, although the last was perhaps better known. Fondi had no particular character. I did not know of the castle then, nor even of Aquinas' having taught there, and we were to see so much of the Via Appia as to shake all the romance from it.

But I did not go back to Fondi and now that there is occasion to write of it, I find it difficult to do so. For, eight years ago, I had seen Fondi only at a glance really, casually, if that is the word. And when one observes in that way, what one has seen is often remembered badly, the terrain changes, names and places tend to merge, to lose their roundness, what with the armies moving in and out, laying their own kind of destruction where they would, and the cities and towns and villages themselves, afterwards, being often indistinguishable one from another. For one cracked wall, one pile of rubble looks much like another. And Fondi had been bombed and shelled and then invaded with small arms. It fell on the afternoon of May 21st and I was to join, on the 22nd, the company who took it.

So it is difficult to write when one has not seen a place in eight years. What do I remember? Only that we sat in an orchard on the northeast edge of town and waited there for a guide to take us into the mountains ahead. Fondi lay below us, one day beyond its liberation, recovering, searching for its dead, starting to build a new life from what it could. And at the time it was no particular concern of ours.

We had been at Minturno for two days and before that for four weeks training in the fields of the Volturno Valley below Caiazzo. We had come up to Fondi from Itri, twenty or thirty of us, replacements, and as we sat in the orchard a dishevelled platoon of Italian pack artillerymen went along the road ahead of us, leading their mules to a narrow trail that wound away and up into the mountains.

We sat waiting until early dusk and then, following the guide who had arrived after some delay, we started up into the mountains ourselves. We climbed all night, succumbing twice to the hazards of darkness so that we became thoroughly lost and had to backtrack, and reached the front only sometime after five in the morning. Seven days later we crossed the Amaseno River at dawn, having gone, without benefit of roads, straight through the mountains to get there. Fondi was somewhere behind, practically forgotten, remembered only for the dead the company had left there and in the mountains that rimmed it.

But later I remembered Fondi and though I did not go back I wish to write of it now because a man whom I shall call Abbate, who was born in Italy, has gone home to Fondi and returned and has told us of it and is not the same for it. Abbate went home to see his mother whom he had not heard from in six years, and he found that she was dead. He went next to see his best friend of childhood and found him in jail; he had shot a neighbor's cow to get meat for his starving children. In Fondi, said Abbate, his mother was dead and nearly everyone else was starving. He shrugged, tears stood in his eyes, and what could he do? He is trying, he said, to bring to this country a niece so that she at least might have a chance to live and grow to adulthood. But for Fondi he can only be sad. Everywhere they are starving. What can one do?

A priest recently returned from Rome said that he had not been to Fondi but that he had seen Gaeta and it has not recovered. It is shattered even now and it will never be the same. There, presumably, the people starve too, although Gaeta may fare better, being on the coast.

WHAT is sentimentality? For now I think I grow sentimental about Fondi, and Gaeta and the rest. When we moved recently I found a packet of letters two and three years old, letters from Italy. To my wife, Angelina P. wrote from Naples in 1949: "We are very poor. . . . we have almost nothing to wear. . . . if you have old clothes, old shoes . . . we need so much your help. . . . the war. . . ." And folded away with the letters was a ruled sheet with the headings: "Gioia, Aprea, Pirone, Epifano, Bruno," and underneath the markings:

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"1 trousers, 3 pr shoes, 2 pr boots, 2 sweaters, 1 shirt, 1 jacket, 1 suit."

It seems a long time ago and we have assumed, I think, that by now the crisis is over. But it is not over at Fondi, nor Gaeta, nor I expect yet at Naples.

"We are very poor," Angelina wrote, "the abandoned poor. . . ."

And at Christmas time Anna G. wrote: "Our house was destroyed by fire, my husband is out of work, and I have one arm I am unable to use. . . . I dare to ask something of your kindness."

We think it is over, and then Abbate comes back to say that Fondi is starving.

What of Itri, of Palaia, of Belvedere, of the many others, the villages where we had fought, or were housed, or had lost friends? And nameless places that you went into and out of, sometimes in the dead of night, advancing silently on the enemy, and he ahead of you, just as silently, moving into and out of places in his retreat. And of those where he chose to make a stand so that even by the time you got to the outskirts, the houses and the streets were torn up by our artillery's trying to root him out so that we could take the place that much easier. At Sassoleone we tried to root him out and once we got in he tried to root us out, so that the village was a shambles most of the time, whole sides of buildings torn away. Smoke blew down the street and a man took his life in his hands to walk out, but we had to walk out anyway and many men were wounded doing just that. I do not think the tourists visit Sassoleone. And perhaps it has not even been rebuilt.

THE canteen filled, the glass of wine offered, the bread, the cheese, the eggs, the shelter in warm barns: how inadequate we are, who were there, to repay these. So that when a man who was not there said to me not long ago that the more he heard of the Italians the more he disliked them, none of them were any good, I could only think that the more we hear of them the more we must wonder at what we have done to them.

In September in Rome we lined up on the Via del Tritone to wait our turn at the GI restaurant on Piazza Poli, and a small tattered blind boy led by his mother played the accordion for the few lire he could collect and a much smaller girl in tatters, alone, sold postcards of the city. They were there every day. And early one morning, on my way to St. Peter's for Mass, I saw the little girl, still alone, asleep in a doorway in one of the narrow side streets that smelled of fish and wine and the night.

If she is alive today, she is perhaps thirteen years old. Where has she been for eight years, this orphan of the city?

And there were always the children. That September they gathered under the tall arches of the Galleria Colonna to shine our shoes, they begged chocolate and candies along the Via Veneto, they trailed us through the Borghese Gardens and waited for us to pay their way into the zoo. On the Palatine they sat in the laps of soldiers and watched as other soldiers with their sketchpads pictured the ruins below.

We had seen them first in Naples, begging cigarettes along the wharf, little girls selling withered oranges on the street, and that first night one lone boy who sold peanuts to us in a dark field as we unloaded from trucks. At Caiazzo they came in at every meal with their tin buckets, and in the hills a blue-legged boy stood by the trail and watched us go, holding in his hands a ration that someone had given him.

At one time we lived three days and two nights in the mountains carrying wounded down a winding trail, and we stayed when we were not working in a farmhouse where the old mother, blind and wizened, slept with the cows so that we might have her bed. We were far up in the mountains, in the north Apennines, and the sun did not come through the rain and mist until the third day and far off in a valley below we could see a city. "Imola," the farmer told us. But winter was to come and spring also before any American soldiers reached there in force.

I do not know where the farm was, somewhere north of Firenzuola, but, like Fondi, I have wanted to go there again. The corn was planted by hand, in winding terraced rows along the slopes and down along the trails you could find beechnuts and fresh water flowing in rivulets.

HOW many lofts we slept in, how many holes, how often on the open hard rock of the mountains, and how few beds!

Towards the end of July we had come back from the Arno, leaving behind the carnage of San Miniato and the hills west of the town where in the last days we slept in the sun in the afternoon and at night crawled out across the hills and watched for moving lights, and listened for the sound of movement coming our way. There was little talking, for indeed there was little to say, and, too, the time taken to speak a word might blot out the other sound, the snapping of a twig, the loosening of a stone.

We came back by night and before dawn had arrived at Villamagna. We came into the deserted lanes, beside the high wall of the villa that dominates the village and down into the olive groves. In a week's time we had ruined a portion of the village water supply, stolen wine, frightened the villagers, killed their chickens and otherwise made ourselves unwelcome. Below the hillside where we stayed the land ran down steeply to a

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wooded ravine and on a bare, brown hill opposite stood a lone isolated house surrounded by a few trees, and some of the men went up there and stole whatever they could.

At Palaia I saw one of the men of the company in his impatience to loot break in the delicate stained glass of a door with his rifle butt, and in some deserted villages there were those who robbed the churches.

It was in San Clemente, when on the high peaks the snow was just beginning, that the shell that marks the difference between coming and going, between half-dreaming and fully knowing, found us, in the middle of October, smashing itself into the doorway of a house where we had taken shelter.

We have been asked and still are asked, were we at Cassino, at Anzio, at the crossing of the Po? And we are asked, too, did we not go to Siena, to Assisi, to Florence at least?

But we were at Palaia, at Sassoleone, at Firenzuola, at San Clemente, at the other unknown places to which the tourists do not go. We climbed in the mountains and hiked on the roads, and explored the paths where no cart would move. We lived with the people. *"Buon giorno,"* they would say with a smile, after we had camped a hundred soldiers in their front yards, dug their groves full of slit trenches, run their animals out of the barns.

And in the beginning we were at Fondi, along the Via Appia, to which we have not returned, but where Abbate has gone and where, he says today, nearly everyone is starving.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Good Guys and Bad Guys

MY businessman friend (see The Commonweal for July 4) has written another, and sharper, letter in which he levels the following charge, among others: "Fundamentally, you see the 'liberal-conservative' dichotomy as not a difference of opinion as to the best means by which to attain the good society, but as a battle royal between the good guys on the one hand and the bad guys (or stupes) on the other."

No and yes. I believe in the existence of good guys and bad guys, and stupes, on all sides of what is not so much a two-sided battle as a general melee.

So I do believe in the existence of good guys and bad guys, and stupes. That it true. It is difficult to distinguish between the badness and the stupidity. That is really God's business. It is the results that concern us, the record, and on this basis I believe that we can identify some honest liberals and some black reactionaries and a great many other shades of opinion and/or perversity in between.

Can you maintain, as my friend seems to, that all the conservatives are worrying about how to "attain the good society"? I don't even think that all the self-anointed liberals are. But if you probe around long enough, you can usually find out if a man believes in some reasonable, intelligent concept of a good society and if he is honestly doing something to attain that society.

So we have two tests. Does he have an intelligent concept? And then is he doing something to put flesh on that concept?

RECENTLY the *CIO News* published some standards by which to judge the good, bad, stupid and indifferent guys in Congress. In the Senate, for example, the CIO took seventeen bills, or amendments to bills, and then marked each Senator right or wrong on the strength of how he voted on these measures. The seventeen selected include such subjects as price control, aid to medicine (but not health insurance), public housing, tidelands oil, control of wetbacks, foreign aid, and immigration (the McCarran Bill). Only one bill affected the CIO directly and that was the bill requesting the President to use the Taft-Hartley eighty-day injunction against the striking Steelworkers.

The *CIO News*, with some restraint, made it clear that its "Right" and "Wrong" were right and wrong "from the viewpoint of the CIO." Nevertheless, I believe that the position taken by the CIO on most of these bills is the position that any man would take if he had an intelligent concept of the good society and a sincere desire to attain it.

According to this test, the Senate voted right six times and wrong eleven times. The "all right" Senators were Anderson, New Mexico; Benton, Connecticut; Chavez, New Mexico; Douglas, Illinois; Hennings, Missouri; Humphrey, Minnesota; Lehman, New York; McMahon, Connecticut; Magnuson, Washington; Moody, Michigan; and Murray, Montana (all Democrats); and Morse, Oregon (Republican).

The "all wrong" Senators, on the CIO's scorebord, were Byrd, Virginia; McCellan, Arkansas (Democrats); and Bennett, Utah; Bricker, Ohio; Bridges, New Hampshire; Butler, Maryland; Jenner, Indiana; Martin, Pennsylvania; Millikin, Colorado; Schoeppel, Kansas; and Welker, Idaho (all Republicans).

In between these two extremes of "rightness" and "wrongness" ranged the other Senators, some mostly right, some mostly wrong, some half-and-half.

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WITHOUT having read the exact text of every bill, or amendment, one could not begin to vouch for the accuracy of the whole test. But I for one am willing to go along with the above list of Senators as an at least partial rundown of the "good guys" and "bad guys" in the U.S. Senate—a spot where you vote either for or against a bill so that the two-sided battle figure is here more appropriate.

But "goodness" and "badness" in this case are terms which are related strictly to a voting record. The motives for voting right may have been wrong; the motives for voting wrong may have been right. The word "stupes" is more charitable for the bad (or wrong) guys. Even Taft and McCarthy, after all, may be suffering from invincible ignorance.

Arthur Krock falls into a trap on the opposite side of the road. Writing in the New York *Times* of August 28, he ridicules Walter Reuther's designation of Adlai Stevenson as "independent" because, Krock says, the CIO has marked lousy, in this voting record, all those Congressmen who proved themselves independent of the CIO and has given its benediction to all those who voted "in accordance with the formal or informal recommendations or demands of the CIO."

What Krock is doing here is muscling in on God's jurisdiction and trying to read the minds and hearts of the "all right" Congressmen. He says, in effect, that they did not vote this way because they honestly believed in their hearts that it was right. They voted this way only because they didn't have the guts to buck the "recommendations or demands of the CIO."

Krock is for Eisenhower. He has made no secret of that. And he is fond of people like Senator Byrd of Virginia, whom the CIO has labeled "all wrong." His column tries to show that the CIO has one standard of independence for Stevenson and another standard for Congressmen.

I don't think it shows that at all. I think it shows that Krock, like most Republicans and Dixiecrats, is scared stiff at the thought that someday the members of the CIO and AFL—some fifteen million in all—are going to start taking these voting lists seriously. These fifteen million union members have perhaps another twenty million voters in their immediate families whose votes they could influence. Between them they could, if they would, sweep the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition out of its present control of Congress and give the country a truly liberal parcel of lawmakers. This day may come a little sooner than we think.

ABOUT the time this appears in print the AFL will be meeting for its annual convention in New York City. Both Eisenhower and Stevenson will address the convention and the omens now point to an endorsement of one or the other by the delegates. If they endorse one or the other, they will endorse Stevenson. That is clear.

This would be the first endorsement of the Presidential candidate of either of the two major parties in the history of the AFL. In 1924 the AFL convention endorsed the senior LaFollette who was running on the Progressive Party ticket (not to be confused with the Progressive Party of 1948 and '52).

If the endorsement comes, it will mark a most important change in the political thinking, and action, of American labor. It is a change that has been developing over the past fifteen years or ever since the CIO proved that politicians remember you kindly if you work for them on Election Day and if you don't work for them, they may remember you, but that's all they will do.

FOR about the past five years the AFL has had its own Political Action Committee in a thing called Labor's League for Political Education. It has done a good job. It has been doing the work that the CIO-PAC has done but without picking up the unpopularity that the PAC has unfortunately accumulated in some areas throughout the country from the old days of "Clear-It-With-Sidney."

The AFL holds in its pocket, I think, the key to the question of how effective labor is going to be in the political arena over the next few years. Except for a few of the stronger and bigger CIO internationals, most of the unions in that group are too concerned with organizing their industries to risk offending new or prospective members by doing an effective job on either political action or political education. I know this is true of my own union.

Most of the AFL unions, on the other hand, are well established in their industries. They have the time and money, and they can afford to risk offending a small minority of their members.

There will be some Republican labor leaders and delegates at the AFL convention. They will probably not try to get an endorsement for Eisenhower, but rather urge the delegates not to break with AFL tradition by endorsing anybody.

With my fingers crossed, I am going to predict that they will fail. I believe that most of the AFL delegates have come to see that the workingman is most seriously affected by the quality of the politics practiced in our state and federal governments, and that whether or not Ike is a nice guy, Stevenson is the "good guy" from the standpoint of labor and the public interest. Like the Senators whom the CIO judged above, all of us come to a time when we must arise and be counted or flunk by default. I think the AFL has come to that time and that it will not flunk.

JOHN C. CORT.

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THE SCREEN

NOT GEMUTLICH

ALTHOUGH it does not depict postwar conditions with the same complete realism and despair that Rossellini showed in "Germany—Year Zero," "The Devil Makes Three" has enough realistic bitterness to make American audiences sit up and take notice. Its story is simple enough: an American captain (Gene Kelly) returns to Germany a few years after the war to visit and thank a family who had helped him; all of the family are dead except the young daughter (Pier Angeli) who is now working as a B-girl in a Munich cafe. She's not angry with Gene, but she is bitter and disillusioned and when he says he wants to do something for her, she answers, "What took you so long?"

Through the whole of "The Devil Makes Three" runs this tone of caustic reproach suggesting that Americans like Gene are returning to Germany because of guilt feelings. Gene isn't too sure why he's in Munich. He's sorry Pier's family was killed (probably by American bombs). He was attracted to the girl during the war, and now he realizes he's falling in love with her. He insists they spend Christmas together, and she suggests visiting realtives in Salzburg. Gene doesn't realize that Pier is working for a new underground movement to restore the Nazi party and that she's using him to smuggle contrabrand and even gold to help the party's funds. We in the audience know that something's up when a couple of mysterious and begoggled motorcyclists (looking remarkably like the messengers of death in Jean Cocteau's "Orpheus") follow Gene and Pier along the famous Autobahn.

The picture is frequently too melodramatic, but Director Andrew Marton has done extremely well in capturing the unhealthy atmosphere of postwar Germany with a series of night-club scenes, bombed-out apartments and hungry people. The magnificent mountain scenery and cozy Christmas setting of Salzburg are strikingly contrasted with the undercurrents of depravity and the machinations of the neo-Nazis.

AUDIENCES who like their movies more escapist can find fare to their taste in the elaborate Technicolor production made from Rex Beach's story, "The World in His Arms." What this picture, set in 1850 San Francisco and Alaska, lacks in realism it makes up for in Raoul Walsh's fast-moving direction and a two-fisted plot about the captain of a sealing boat who makes big dough poaching seals in Russian Alaska and selling the pelts in California. As played by Gregory Peck, he is a wiry tough guy, very much interested in wine, women and a little singing. Fighting is also one of his specialties, and in several friendly scraps with his competitor (Anthony Quinn) Peck comes out a slugging victor.

He falls head-over-heels in love with a beautiful Russian countess (Ann Blyth) and when she's kidnapped by a prince to Alaska, practically the whole cast follows after—to start the fights all over again in another location. As long as you don't take it too seriously, "The World in His Arms" will hold your interest. Gregory and Ann are a handsome pair to watch; and the best episode, a race between Peck and Quinn in their schooners during a wild storm, is fascinating. You can almost feel the wind and taste the salt.

FOR those who like a little whimsey and don't mind how thin it's stretched there's "Monkey Business," an aptly named comedy about a scientist who's inventing some kind of a vitamin that restores youth. After a lot of horseplay, he takes the vitamin and then starts acting like a teenager. And when he gets back to normal, his wife takes a dose and she begins acting like a kittenish bride. Then later they both, by mistake, take some of the stuff and go back to childhood. And if you're still with this picture after the first hour, you'll learn how it all works out, but since you've guessed every turn in the plot up to this time you'll have no difficulty in figuring out the finale.

If it weren't for the fact that Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers play this couple very deftly, you'd hardly be able to stand this concoction. Cary has a flare for this kind of nonsense and puts it over well, and Ginger can still do a mean Charleston when the script so requires. And they are well supported by Charles Coburn, as the boss of the chemical plant who's more than a little interested in his lost youth, and by Marilyn Monroe, as Coburn's young secretary who makes a play for Cary after he gets a crew hair-cut. Some of the lines are amusing, but Director Howard Hawks had several strikes against him before he ever started with this screwball material that every now and then attempts to be realistic. Once the whimsical situation is stated, it's finished and you agree with the leads when they wonder if being young is all it's cracked up to be.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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Ernest Hemingway: Valor and Defeat

SEYMOUR KRIM

THE beauty of art, and probably the awfulness of it as well, is that any artist is sooner or later fated to reveal everything that he possesses and is. I can think of no other pursuit which makes such complete demands on a man: we can forgive the philosopher for not being a man of action, and we forgive Napoleon for not being Descartes (although some will never forgive him for being Napoleon). Each, we think, is extraordinary in his own niche and has altered life to the extent that he has been superlative at his own work. But art—to smack it home for the thousandth time—is "everything" at highest pitch: the artist must be in his own terms both man of action and philosopher, conquerer and victim, pauper and king.

Especially in literature, where meanings are communicated through the common language that we use daily, is it true that nothing less than the totality of existence is the burden which humps the minds of our best novelists and poets. Who is to draw the line which tells our literary artists what to write about and what to let alone? Nobody—the creative writer, an unacknowledged pioneer of the most significant experience of each generation, is completely, nakedly, everlastingly, on his own.

Since T.S. Eliot, the notion of the "tradition"—the best that has been thought and written about in Western culture since Grecian days—has provided the illusion of a bolster to some of our artists; in an era of perplexing and painful confusion they have sought some relief by yielding up their own egos and bedding down in traditional ideas and attitudes. But these are not the writers who create our imaginations by their originality and forcefulness, nor feed us the vital substances that, as far as art goes, are what blood is to life. Let us face it: it is the independent spirits, nourished perhaps by tradition as Balzac was by Catholicism, or nourished only by their own pain and disgust as were D. H. Lawrence and Celine, but above all fearless and truth-seeking and utterly alone—more so than you and I—who have made art the dynamic and finally incredible thing that it is.

ERNEST Hemingway is a serious and independent artist, and he must be judged by high standards. He is given to posturing, as most of his acute critics have seen, and, to put it bluntly, he has made a public ass of himself more often than most serious artists. His crooning over childish things—the Stork Club, sports writers, movie actresses and actors—has led some very intellectual critics to dismiss him as an "adolescent" and be done with him; and even his admirers are forced to apologize for the side of him that embarrasses them. Judged by the "totality of existence" Hemingway is a conspicuously limited writer and man. But within those limitations he has made a contribution, somewhat akin to Turgeniev's in Russian literature, approached by no other American writer.

Hemingway has things in "common" with Thoreau, Twain, Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, and no doubt others, as literary historians will soon be pointing out, but still he stands alone. He has written with all the love of which he is capable—the love of men and that of the objects which men must handle, and the physical environment in which they must perforce exist —and this love, or intense feeling if you wish, led him to invent a style which could make the reader *experience* an aspect of life that only came into true being as a result of this one man's art. When you stop to think of it, this is no small achievement; because one man felt more intensely about certain things which the majority of his contemporaries took for granted we were given a fresh art which gave extreme pleasure to many readers and one which was imitated by more American writers than had ever imitated any other of our artists. This is added proof of just how fresh this art of Hemingway's was.

But as *The Old Man and the Sea* (Scribners. $3.) shows again, this freshness could not survive too much of a strain—such as frequent publication or "deep" thoughts—without revealing limitations which have become more apparent with each of Hemingway's recent books. This intense and brilliant artist—and we must never forget that he is above all an artist, and quite as intense, though less demonstrative, than Faulkner—has only a smallish range in which he can do his best work, and it is the familiarity of the range which makes his new book (more a long short story than a novel) slightly "old hat."

This is not to say that the book isn't moving, or written and felt with that romantic dignity which has become Hemingway's seal: it is all of that, and it also contains that earnest personal concern with courage in the midst of defeat which has made its author a sort of literary knight of the twentieth century. But the sad

Mr. Krim's work has appeared in the Hudson and Partisan Reviews.

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fact is that we can anticipate most of the new book as we read it because, by this late date, we know our Hemingway too well. He has paid for his extraordinary celebrity by having been too much with us "too quickly," and he seems to have few mysteries left that we don't already know. By an ironic stroke of fortune we know him almost as well as we know ourselves.

AS for the story of the new book: an old, a nameless Cuban fisherman, has gone eighty-four days without a catch; on the eighty-fifth day of this famine he goes out alone in his boat—his "boy" helper, who worships the old man, has been forbidden by his family to go any longer with such an unlucky fisherman—and prays for the big catch that will restore his pride and pay the bills. He gets it: a fish larger than any he has ever seen. But although hooked, the fish tows the small boat out to sea, and the old man has to sail with his victim for three days before harpooning the fish and securing it to the back of his dingy.

Even though he has caught the greatest fish of his career there is still the arduous homeward journey to overcome, and this is what undoes the old man. Weak from lack of food, hurt from the struggle with the fish, the old man is unable to fight off the scavenger sharks who rip his mighty fish to shreds, and he barely makes shore with nothing to show for his ordeal but the beautiful, bare skeleton of the giant fish attached to the back of his boat. At the end of the story, as he is nursed by the young apprentice who loves him, we feel that the old man will die as a result of this last great effort; but even though he will die—is the suggestion of the story—he actually was the conqueror, not the sea, and he ennobled life by his effort in spite of his apparent defeat.

All this is quite consistent with Hemingway's themes for the last quarter of a century: here is the "grace under pressure" raised to nobility—or the attempt to raise it there—and here is one of the Undefeated struck down by forces beyond his control, but leaving behind him a code of virtue which brings honor and beauty to defeat, and finally wrests from the malignant world a triumph of sorts. These have always been Hemingway's themes, and will no doubt always be.

The trouble is that they are no longer as fresh or telling as they once were because we are too familiar with them and with him. That, to the experienced Hemingway reader, is the main difficulty with the new book. He has not, as the admirers of James and Melville tell us, "developed" enough for a "major" artist. Well, few do, and almost as few reach Hemingway's accomplishment; but in this instance the professors surely have a point because each succeeding Hemingway book of the last few years has shown the old warrior fighting gamely and with great spirit, but with

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only the same old spear and pair of battered Keds, which, to invoke that "totality of existence" once again, is just not enough.

IF history is any guide, Hemingway has already done the significant part of his life's work; it is likely that in the next few years his reputation will go into a rapid decline, to be resurrected much later on when he is read and appreciated by men who are not as close to him as we are and who will see him differently. He is, by our living needs and standards, a true, brilliant, but very limited artist, and I believe that we have gotten all we can from him now. He may write several more good or even fine books of a kind, but it is very doubtful if they will extend our sensibilities and refresh our vision of life as the earlier works did; and the chances are that they will merely repeat or embellish the best of his earlier work, as does *The Old Man and the Sea.*

It is very difficult for champions in any profession to know when to quit, and especially so for a writer, who finally writes to live—if that doesn't sound to pretentious; but it would be quite wonderful if Hemingway could quit, as Joe Louis couldn't, before his reputation becomes tattered and dulled, or even worse. And yet it is unlikely. The fatal greed or anxiety that made G. B. Shaw talk too much and take the edge off the brilliance which he knew he possessed, or that makes none but the wisest athletes know when to quit and avoid making pitiable what was once awesome, will probably keep Hemingway publishing.

Existential tact and awareness—not for the living-room, but for what used to be called eternity—is the hardest of choices; but life is merciless and it is a fact that if men act like less then angels, if they act comfortably like "men," then they will be damned by their brothers. Weakness or vanity invite the same in others, and no quarter is given because, alas, none is deserved down here in the arena. It was out of just such stinging mortal awareness that Hemingway once made hard little diamonds, and out of indulging the same that it is likely he will make nothing but glass from now on.

A Moving Story of People Left Without a Priest

ISLAND PRIEST. By Henri Queffelec. Dutton. $3.

By FRANK GETLEIN

THIS is the novel from which was made that remarkable motion picture of a year ago, "God Needs Men." Its appearance now should increase our appreciation of that film, not simply because, as is fairly frequent, the picture managed to transcribe the story perfectly in its own way and did not content itself with a dramatized record of the novel, but especially because the novel is surely one of the very few to be written in our time as if the movies did not exist.

The novel today has learned a great deal from the movies, cameramen's tricks as well as such more worthwhile techniques as cutting, the externalization of the mental symbol and, in general, the compulsion to "present rather than tell." Yet this excellent novel, thoroughly modern in style, tone and audacity of theme, completely and rather refreshingly ignores the lessons of the screen. Dialogue is rarely sustained for as much as a half page. Chapters at a time go by without a word of quoted speech. There are few scenes in which we watch what is happening take place before our eyes. What is happening is almost always taking place in someone's mind.

The tiny island of Sein, off the Breton coast, is inhabited by a village of fishers and salvagers. They live by what they can wrest from the sea and what the sea throws upon their beaches, the wreckage from stricken vessels. On occasion, it is not denied, there are those who light fires during storms, in an effort to encourage the sea to strew its manna on the stones of Sein. Their votive prayers include one, "For wreckage . . . pray God to cover our beaches with wreckage."

The priest of the island was sent there as a punishment for scandalous sins of the flesh; at the beginning of the novel he is paroled to the mainland and he is not replaced. The islanders are desolate. The whole burden of the story is the effort of these people to make their own priest out of a fellow fisherman, Thomas Gourvennec, who had been sacristan. Gradually they succeed and we watch, fascinated, the inner struggle of Thomas. "They knew full well that they, the fishermen, had to rely upon someone else to care for their souls; and they were ready to pledge their obedience—they, the barbarians—if a worthy man should propose himself as their leader."

Thomas begins by preaching sermons and leading the prayers. He is soon persuaded to move into the empty presbytery, to spend his days consoling those in need of help, distributing small alms, accepting the share of every catch and every wreck marked for God. He moves on to a funeral service, to the hearing of confessions and the granting of absolution and, before the end of his reign, to celebrating Mass and offering Communion. For the ache that the islanders felt most deeply without a priest was that their church should have God in it only as much as He is on the sea, on the rocks, along the littered beaches. As Thomas moves through these stages of formal sacrilege, he gains and we share a profound understanding of the priesthood, of the complicated

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relationships between God and man and that Church which is both.

"Thomas was amazed at his own power. He was lord of the island; the presbytery, the church, the cemetery, all the Christian section without which the cottages in the village would have been no more than a miserable hamlet peopled by savages—all of it was his." He gives the lead to his people in preparing together for hard times and when the preparation involves the "finding" of a mainlander's hogs, Thomas sanctions the kidnapping of a mainlander butcher, in order that the animals be slaughtered as efficiently as possible. Suddenly we are watching the whole history of the Church in politics, the spendid successes as well as the good starts leading so swiftly to corruption.

This widening of meaning that takes place in the middle of the book throws the whole story onto another plane. The island, surrounded by threatening or lavish seas, is indeed man's home in the universe. Starting with Adam we have made our own world and in it a shipwreck is always to someone's advantage as well as to someone's disaster. It is a strong temptation, living in the world, to light an occasional fire behind the murderous rocks nature has already concealed. "Perhaps they caused men to die, but after all, didn't those who went to sea know what its perils were? The islanders did not bring about the deaths of widows and orphans; only of those good-for-nothing sailors. And let the Dutch, the English, and the Nanteans die before the islanders." This is the voice of Everyman, speaking off-stage, shortly before the beginning of his play with death and first things.

Humanist Morality: A Novelized Tract

THE FRONTIERS. By John Strachey. Random House. $3.

By PAUL V. FARRELL

JOHN Strachey, one time vociferous Marxist, later eloquent Socialist, and always able member of, and cabinet minister for, the British Labor Party, wrote this novel during World War II service as a Wing Commander with the R.A.F. It is the story of a fighter pilot, downed in Nazi-occupied French territory, who tries to make his way into Vichy France and then to England with the aid of an assorted group of varying patriotic hues.

Strachey's short preface to the book is both a warning and an explanation of its failure as a novel. The escaping airman, James Cranley, is identified there as a composite of the pilots in the author's squadron, and like so many composites comes out so thin and characterless one wonders how the R.A.F. did what it did. A second purpose of the book, Strachey says, is to suggest the fundamental objections he had formed to the totalitarian world out-

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look in general and the Communist view of world developments in particular. Such a declaration is fair enough to introduce an essay, but unfairly imposes an interpretation on the reader of a novel before he has had a chance to experience and judge the work itself.

So, despite scattered passages of great feeling and poetic insight, *The Frontiers* remains a tract, with the main male characters apparently representing the frontiers Strachey personally crossed in his political and philosophical journeys. Cranley is the decent, patriotic, but politically naive English university man. Jean Castille, one of the party that travels with the pilot in his attempt to escape, is the intense, humorless Communist. Professor de Bonheur, also in flight because he cannot come to terms with the fascists of the Vichy regime, is the liberal humanist trying to answer the question he sees facing the modern intellectual—is it worth the effort to oppose the historical determinism and doctrine of total justification of fascism and communism with the slender weapon of blind integrity?

The professor, and Strachey, movingly (and sometimes a little priggishly), reiterate "yes." The humanist's skepticism in estimating the consequences of his actions (as opposed to the totalitarian's certainty) does not necessarily lead to indecision and inaction. For it may be that what we do from our hearts (which means what we do in accordance with our historically established code of conduct), says the professor, "it may be that it is just these actions, and these alone, which will prove to have been justified. For, however hopeless and purposeless they may seem to us, in our ignorance, to be, it may be that these actions alone will stand."

Whether or not this kind of de-Christianized humanist morality is able to stand up against the powers of evil—certainly many must have died in defense of it—is a philosophical argument. The point here is that it has all but smothered what might have been a first-rate story. Strachey is still a better polemicist than novelist.

Man in the Kremlin

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF STALIN. By Louis Fischer. Harper. $3.50.

By M. A. FITZSIMONS

AMONG the dreariest pieces of contemporary writing are Communist biographies of Stalin. As this genre bestows on Stalin absolute wisdom in theoretical and practical affairs, the biography presents the untragic struggle of virtuous infallibility against evil. Other writers on Stalin suffer from two difficulties: the available and useful material for the last twenty-five years is extremely limited; and his ruthlessness arouses such hatred that the biographer forgets his human subject and becomes a prosecutor.

These two difficulties weigh heavily on Louis Fischer, long an enquiring and anxious admirer of the Soviet regime. Before 1939 Fischer's position might have been summed up in Lincoln Steffens' judgment: "I have seen the future and it works."

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Thereafter he uttered his supressed misgivings. Subsequent events have made of him a Stalin-hater, who occasionally reminds himself that the Soviet leader, 'an outcast in a castle,' is to be pitied.

The author's theme is power, power corrupting absolutely. Stalin's drive for power, he believes, originates in rejection—by father, by Lenin in his political testament, and by the wife who committed suicide. The crude Georgian Bolshevik, struggling with his sense of inferiority before the more cultured Russian Bolsheviks, grabbed the wolf's tail of power for reassurance. This choice dooms him to a life-time of holding and no security. NEP capitalists and many peasants were liquidated, then the Old Bolsheviks, only to be replaced by swarms of newly suspected enemies. Power creates these enemies and finds its endless justification in them. Even the victories of World War II arouse only new fears, which explain Soviet postwar foreign policy.

This interpretation raises problems which Fischer does not always recognize. He says that in Stalin the Bolshevik system found its man, whereas Lenin, Trotsky and Bukharin had some sense of proportion. The lack of a sense of proportion makes Stalin totalitarian. These judgments are not reconciled. Fischer moves between seeing Stalinism as a developed Leninism and considering Stalin as the brutal betrayer of the revolution. At times Fischer fails to look afresh at incidents and sees them too much in the partisan terms of early Bolshevik quarrels. One major point remains unexplained. Why is it that Stalin, described as the enormously vain expunger of unpleasant realities past and present, uniquely retains the realism which, Fischer argues, deters him from war today and prompts him to work out the succession struggle in his own lifetime? Fischer believes that the police power under Beria will be the major force in deciding the succession.

The author exaggerates in calling Soviet nationalism racist. He obviously finds feudalism a hateful word and freely uses it to convey his horror of the Soviet regime. This

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may be emotionally satisfying to the author but is not illuminating to anyone familiar with western European feudalism. Apart from these weaknesses and omissions, Fischer's volume contains useful material and perceptive judgments which are obviously the fruit of long study and reflection.

Prejudice and Law

EQUALITY BY STATUTE: Legal Controls Over Group Discrimination. By Morroe Berger. Columbia. $3.25.

By JAMES O'GARA

NATIONAL compulsory FEPC legislation is a hot issue, and it is not likely to become any cooler between now and the election. Certainly what is at stake is worth arguing about; the distressing thing is that most of the debates never get to the point, largely because opponents of FEPC are very frequently refuting claims which are, in fact, never made by supporters of such legislation. If only to prevent such wasted efforts and to provide those who disagree with a common vocabulary, this would be the time for a book on the subject which enjoyed some chance of being widely read.

Equality by Statute, however, is unlikely to meet that need. Nor would it even be fair to tax the author with this as a failure, for he really does not aim at a popular market. An assistant professor of sociology at Princeton, Dr. Berger has tried to give a scholarly consideration of the legal status of minority groups in the U.S. since 1865.

In addition to tracing the pattern of decisions by the Supreme Court from the Reconstruction Era onward, the book contains a detailed description of the operation and administration of New York's anti-discrimination law. This is accompanied by a discussion of some of the most common complaints that have been made about its enforcement.

The most interesting part of the book is the last chapter, which is a more general consideration of the role of law in the control of prejudice and discrimination. In addition to explaining what effect legislation on this subject can be expected to have, the author here includes a brief description of some of the attempts that have been made to classify the prejudiced according to type. He touches, for example, on the work of MacIver and Stone, in which two types of prejudiced persons are distinguished: the first, and larger, group made up of those who have acquired racial prejudice from their own social environment, and the second group made up of those for whom prejudice represents an outlet for their own tensions and hostility. Such typologies are valuable, but the references here are necessarily so sketchy that most readers are likely to prefer to seek out the originals rather than to rely on secondary material.

The language throughout is that of the thesis, and the going is sometimes rather hard. All in all, perhaps the book will be found most useful as supplementary reading for undergraduate students in sociology.

REVIEWERS

Frank Getlein is associated with the Spaeth Foundation in New York.

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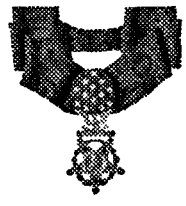

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